THE RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC CONTEXT OF THE SERBIAN STRATEGIC CULTURE

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The paper entitled "Religion as a factor of strategic culture on the examples of Christianity and Islam" (Vojno delo, No. 8/2019) analyses the ideas and values that can come from a religious context, and which can greatly influence strategic culture of different collectivities in such a way that it will create a line of demarcation between what is "allowed" and what is not, primarily in the use of force. Therefore, the functionalist and legitimation relations of religious narratives towards wars and relations towards the (not)permitted use of force are analysed on the examples of two monotheisms: Christianity and Islam. This paper represents a framework of a global character, so it is necessary to clarify how religion participates in strategic orientation of modern states.

How does Serbia relate to this factor of strategic culture, to what extent does it participate in the current political reality and how does it communicate with equivalent narratives in the surrounding countries, especially in the light of the 1990s conflicts? Where is the difference between the ethnic and religious contextuality of identity in this area and to what extent do these two contexts support each other, and to what extent do they represent an obstacle to the unique identity profiling of our society? This paper will try to answer the delegated research questions by consulting literature from various academic, religious, theoretical-political and geopolitical sources, pleading that the answers be as nuanced as possible and devoid of any bias.

Key words: *strategic culture, religion, Orthodoxy, ethnicity, people, nation, security, war*

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Instead of an introduction

The alleged anecdotal content from the time of the Second World War, in which one of the actors was much mentioned, and often falsely quoted, Winston Churchill, is still being retold. Namely, when Hitler went to Britain and gave the alert to the Air Force that started bombing London, Churchill allegedly called ministers to see what they should do. In the country that was just recovering from the great global economic crisis, the question arose: how to provide funds for the country's defence or, better said, where to get it from. A minister without hesitation suggested that funds intended for culture be transferred to war budget. "What are we going to defend then?" the Prime Minister answered with the question.[1]

Although there are no official historiographical documents that would confirm the credibility of the mentioned narration of the British Prime Minister at that time, the alleged quote continued to live and became the favourite one among protagonists of the theory of the vital importance of culture for nation, state and its collective identity. Cultural heritage, from time immemorial to present day, greatly makes us what we are and what we are just like, and not different or nothing. Culture, with its wide range of features (language, alphabet, customs, religion and its confession, lite-rature, art in general, engineering, etc.), is woven into identities of our or any other people, ethnic or confessional group or tribe on the planet. Therefore, it is said that an attitude towards one's own culture is consequently the attitude towards oneself as a part of the same culture and identity.

Combined with strategic thinking, culture has acquired the prefix strategic, which is a narrower definition that deals with authors who study the connection between culture and the behaviour of states, i.e. predictability in behaviour, using the frequency of manifestation of certain cultural models characteristic for some societies. The concept of such a developed intervention certainly does not exclude the possibility of "researching behaviour of other security actors and ...the most diverse varieties of identity features, which unequivocally correspond to this concept".[2]

Since the subject of this paper mainly refers to the factor of strategic culture, which has found its basis in the field of religion and its interactive intervention with related factors such as national history, myths, (ethno)national identity, etc, it will be analysed through several fragments. These are: the acceptance of the Serbian Christianity by Byzantium (and not by Rome), a special combination of the religious and the ethnic on the example of Saint Sava's teaching as a construct created between the two world wars according to well-known ethnophiletistic narratives, and polemic in defining the supremacy of these identity features among Serbs. The part

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[1] According to: Dragan Stojanović, "O kulturi, možda uzalud", *Politika*, September 2, 2016.
[2] Milovan Subotić, "Religija kao faktor strateške kulture na primerima hrišćanstva i islama", Vojno delo br. 8/2019. p. 75.

dealing with the modernity of religious and ethnic identities will discuss the essential context of strategic culture (the relationship of strategic culture to war and conflicts) that affects the complexity of different religious and ethnic identities in the Balkans, such as the 1990s wars.

Serbs as an ethnic category and Orthodoxy as a Christian denomination: identities that complement or antagonize each other?

Serbs at the time of the acceptance of Eastern Christianity

In the period before the acceptance of Christianity, the Serbian religion was, as in most of the world at that time, polytheistic. In this particular case, it was a pagan, polytheistic religion,[3] which was inspired by nature and primarily oriented towards it. Since the heritage of Serbs, and Slavs in general, is much less preserved than the mentioned Hellenes, thus, for the most part, only the names of their gods were recorded, while we know very little or nothing about their characteristics.[4]

In accordance with the eternally dominant cult of ancestors, Serbs had a special national god – the family protector, so it was noted that they obviously could not part with him even when they accepted Christianity. Aware of this unbreakable bond, delicate Christianity preachers recommended that at baptism they choose one of the Christian saints as the protector of their family and home, in the place of the "old national god". That is how baptismal name was established and every Serbian house got its saint – its St. Patron's Day,[5] feast day or celebrating St. Patron's Day,

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[3] If we use a narrative from Greek mythology in the description of this period, we will see that the Greek pagan religion was also polytheistic, which means that they had a great number of gods and goddesses, and some of the temples dedicated to them have been preserved to this day. According to this mythology, gods and goddesses were anthropomorphic (humanlike), which was not judged solely by appearance, but also on the basis of strongly emotional behaviour. Taking on human traits, such as imperfection and vulnerability, they quarrelled, got drunk, fell in love, beat, envied, hated and cheated. More in: Robert Grevs, *Grčki bogovi i heroji*, Miba Books, Beograd, 2017.

[4] Thus, in the "departmental sense", Triglav was the god of gods, Perun - the god of thunder, Svarog - the god of the sky, Stribog - the god of wind and air, and Dajbog (Dažbog) - the god of sun and rain, Crnobog - the god of night, darkness and everything mysterious and mystical, Radogost – the god of hospitality and protector of home, Koledo – the god of sun and light, Davor – the god of war, Usud – the god of destiny; Prov – the god of justice, Svetovid – the god with four heads (the god of four seasons), Dodol – the god of rain, Lada – the goddess of beauty and love, Ljelja – the goddess of companionship, Živa – the goddess of life, Morana (Mora) – the goddess of death, etc . According to: Slobodan Jarčević, "Pantenon glavnih slovenskih bogova – moćni Perun, opasnik Triglav, višnji Svarog, Srpsko nasleđe", *Istorijske sveske, no. 3*. March 1988.

[5] As a family holiday, St. Patron's Day remained only with Serbs owing to the fact that Saint Sava, the first archbishop of the Serbian Orthodox Church, liturgically systematized the renamed pagan polytheistic idols. The liturgical rite defined at that time has remained largely the same to this day, with

as they say in some parts of our country. Bearing in mind that other Slavs also had a pronounced cult of ancestors, the custom of celebrating St. Patron's Day most likely represented a kind of practical replacement of the family, i.e. kin, pagan protector, Christian patron saint. Gathering round table completely corresponds to an ancient understanding because eating and drinking mainly consisted of the idea of primitive people about paradise. Obviously, the Serbian Church, without much thought, accepted this popular custom and developed it in Christian spirit, creating a special liturgical rite to celebrate such a national holiday. All of these, of course, are not Christian, but pagan representations from pre-Christian time.

The strong influence of pre-Christian period among Serbs is still visible today in the examples of naming Christian saints by names that correspond to polytheistic natural narratives. Thus, St. Ilija is called the Thunderer, St. Pantelija the guardian of winds, St. Vlasije the guardian of herd, etc. Pagan recurrences are also seen in the way of celebrating important liturgical holidays, so on Christmas Eve the Christmas tree, cake, Christmas bread are prepared, on Saint John's Eve starting and crossing fire are practiced, on Lazarus Saturday wreaths of fresh flowers are made, children carry bells in churchyards, etc. Rituals organized during the celebration of Christian holidays today unequivocally result from the heritage of polytheistic festivals of our ancestors.

The Christianization of Serbs, which took place according to the Christian narratives of Byzantium, and not Rome, greatly defined further religious (confessional) identity of Serbs, and also strongly influenced the development of the Serbian culture, literacy and the overall Serbian history. The process of accepting Christianity among the South Slavs was gradual and took place in several phases. While the "beginning of the acceptance of Christianity by Serbs can be talked about during the 7th and 8th century, it can be said that it was largely completed during the 9th and 10th century",[6] which made Ćirković draw a conclusion that "successful baptism of Serbs laid the foundation for the establishment and development of the Serbian Christianity, represented in the form of the Serbian Orthodox Church".[7]

The constituent role of Orthodoxy is also unquestionable. It is believed that during the Nemanjić dynasty, when Orthodoxy became the official Serbian religion, national unity was accomplished.[8] Under the influence of Orthodox teaching, Serbian

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certain changes introduced by Serbian Metropolitan Mihailo in 1862. It is believed that, although it dates back to the end of the 8th century, when the baptism of the South Slavs began, the very term St. Patron's Day was first recorded in Ohrid, in 1018. Cyril and Methodius, 150 years earlier, and then their student, the first Slavic archbishop Clement and his 26 students, during the baptism of pagan tribes offered Christian saints - protectors of families, instead of pagan household deities. (More in: Negoslava Stanojević, „Slava – jedina neprekinuta tradicija Srba", *Agro media*, Dec 2018).

[6] Božidar Ferjančić, "Konstantin VII Porfiogenit", *Vizantijski izvori za istoriju naroda Jugoslavije*, Vizantološki institut, Beograd, 1959. (1-98), p. 11.

[7] Sima Ćirković, *Srbi među evropskim narodima*, Equilibrium, Beograd, 2004. p. 96.

[8] The Nemanjić political thought in Serbia as a whole was under the greatest influence of Eastern Roman political philosophy, but it also had its specifics. An understanding of the sublime source of state power results in a certain understanding of the meaning and purpose of state power, the limited sovereignty and obligations of rulers, the duties and obligations of subordinates,

and some Eastern and South Slavic rulers often built churches and monasteries to the glory of God. Many monasteries and churches were built in Kosovo during the reign of the Nemanjić dynasty, while throughout Serbia there are churches and monasteries built by members of the Branković, Karađorđević and Obrenović dynasty.[9] What indicates the indissolubility of ethnic and religious identities among Serbs is the fact that some members of the Nemanjić dynasty ended their lives not only as "earthly" rulers, but also as monks. The direct connection of many Serbian rulers with Orthodoxy is also represented in a great number of canonized leaders. The canonized Serbian rulers from the Nemanjić dynasty were: Stefan Nemanja, Stefan the First-Crowned, Milutin, Dragutin, Stefan Uroš and Stefan Dečanski, from the Hrebeljanović dynasty: Prince Lazar and Stefan Lazarević, and from the Branković dynasty Saint Stefan the Blind, Jovan, Đorđe and Angelina.[10]

The role of Orthodoxy in the literacy of medieval Serbs is also impressive. What facilitated this endeavour was certainly the fact that the favourable circumstance for spreading and maintaining Orthodoxy was the use of the liturgical language understood by adherents. Namely, while liturgical narratives and sermons were held in Greek for Serbs, Christianity spread slowly and with difficulty. With the introduction of liturgical, Church Father and theological texts in Church Slavic language (when Christianity was preached to Slavs in that language[11]) it was gladly accepted. This example shows that the acceptance of Christianity from Rome would be a problem in

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the relationship between Church and state, etc. If state power comes from God, then it is limited by divine moral laws, and its ultimate meaning is not only prosperity, but, ultimately, the salvation of subordinates in eternity. (According to: Borislav Grozdić, "Shvatanje o izvoru i poreklu državne vlasti – prilog izučavanju političke filosofije Nemanjića", *Srpska politička misao* 1/2016, 307-323).

[9] Prince Stracimir (Gradac near Čačak), the Grand Prince Stefan Nemanja (Mary, the mother of Jesus and St. Nicholas near Kuršumlija, Đurđevi Stupovi, Studenica, Hilandar, St. Nicholas), King Stefan the First-Crowned (Žiča, Pridvorica), King Radoslav (adds narthex to Studenica), King Vladislav (Mileševa), King Uroš II (Sopoćani), Queen Consort Helen of Anjou (Gradac near Raška), King Dragutin (St. Achillius in Arilje; tradition also attributes the founding of three Fruška Gora monasteries to him: Bešenovo, Velika Remeta and Mala Remeta), King Milutin (Saint Jovan, Banjska, St. George in Staro Nagoričane, Gračanica, Our Lady of Ljeviš, King's Church in Studenica, renovated Prohor Pčinjski, the Serbian Monastery of Holy Archangels in Jerusalem), King Vladislav II (the Tavna Monastery near Bijeljina), King Stefan Dečanski (Visoki Dečani), Tsar Dušan (Holy Archangels, started by Matejče), Tsar Uroš V (completed by Matejče), John Ouresis Doukas Palaiologos (Meteora), King Vukašin and King Marko Mrnjavčević (Holy Archangels near Prilep), Prince Lazar Hrebeljanović (Ravanica), Despot Stefan Lazarević (Manasija), Despot Đurađ Branković (Small Church in Smederevo), Vožd Karađorđe Petrović (Church in Topola), Prince Miloš Obrenović (the Cathedral Church of St. Michael the Archangel in Belgrade, Church in Topčider), Prince Aleksandar Karađorđević (the Church of Thanksgiving in Radovanjski Lug), King Milan Obrenović (renewed and crowned in Žiča), King Alexander Obrenović (St. Petka Iverica), King Petar Karađorđević (St. George in Oplenac), King Alexander Karađorđević (St. Andrew the First Called in Dedinje). According to: Dragoljub Stevanović, "Tragovi vladara", *Politika*, July 7, 2019.

[10] More about canonized and other rulers during the turbulent Serbian history see: Miroslav Todorović, *Zaboravljeni srpski vladari i njihove zemlje*, Leo Commerce, Beograd, 2015.

[11] At that time, it was the common language of the South and East Slavs.

the wider acceptance of this mission because at that time the Roman Catholic Church still adhered to the so-called *trilingual heresy.*[12]

Education can also be said to be the gift of Orthodoxy. Saint Sava, who achieved the independence of the Serbian Orthodox Church and was its first archbishop, was also the first translator of theological, liturgical, legislative and hagiographic texts from Greek into Church Slavic, as well as the author of several original texts. Saint Sava and his disciples, monks of the Hilandar Monastery, spent several years in Serbia, spreading Orthodoxy and education at the same time. It is noted that the first schools in Serbia were in monasteries, as well as that Petar Petrović Njegoš and Vuk Stefanović Karadžić completed their primary education in these places of worship.

Saint Sava's teaching as a unifying element of the nation and confession

The role of Saint Sava in the Christianization of Serbs is essential and indisputable. Matejić supports and complements this claim when he says: "The fame and authority of Saint Sava among Serbs has not been surpassed by any of the Serbian historical figures. The Serbian culture and history are rich in the most diverse heroes, but none of them is as popular and influential among Serbs as Saint Sava. He endowed the Serbian Orthodox Church and Serbs with the spirit and qualities that were necessary for their sustainability through their history of martyrdom".[13] Interpreters of the role of Saint Sava in the Christianization of Serbs often point out that he did not, although it is often misinterpreted, founded any church, but that "he made Orthodoxy in Serbia Serbian, and made Serbia Orthodox".[14] This symbiotic relationship between early Orthodox Christianity and ethnic specificity was obviously valuable for the preservation of the Serbian religiosity, and also national and cultural identity. That is why there is an almost general agreement that the medieval Serbian state is characterized by "symphonia of spiritual and secular power, that is, the church and state".[15] Moreover, it should be pointed out that in this context, the Serbian Orthodoxy is not different from Russian, Greek, Bulgarian, Romanian or Orthodoxy of any other Orthodox ethnicity because every Orthodox nation has one or more saints that it considers its own. Thus, "Russians have Saint Vladimir; Bulgarians – Saints Cyril and Methodius; Greeks - Saints Constantine and Helen; Georgians – Saint Nina; the Orthodox Church in the US - St. Herman of Alaska, and Serbs have Saint Sava as their favourite saint".[16]

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[12] The only liturgical languages allowed to Roman Catholics were Hebrew, Latin and Greek because the inscription on the cross on which Jesus was crucified was written in those three languages. The Byzantine or Eastern Orthodox Church was more lenient, so it allowed other languages to be used as liturgical ones.

[13] Mateja Matejić, *Biography of Saint Sava*, Columbus - Ohio, Kosovo Publishing Co. 1976, p. 85.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Sergije Troicki, "Crkveno-politička ideologija svetosavske Krmčije i Vlastareve sintagme", *Glas SAN*, Odeljenje društvenih nauka, knj. 2, Beograd, 1953, p. 76.

[16] Mateja Matejić, *Prayer Book for Orthodox Christians*, Columbus, Ohio, 1990, pp. 214-215.

The ideological source of this relationship, above all, is the Nomocanon of Saint Sava,[17] and also other legal codes and documents. The doctrine of symphonia, harmony and reciprocity of the church and state, which originates from the Roman[18] Empire, as well as any political theory, is based on a certain philosophical view of the world. Thus, "the basis of such a symphonia, the so-called *theodulia*,[19] is the teaching of the church on the state mission, that is, the teaching saying that state is the result of God's wisdom and providence, and the goal of its existence is that a man, who fell away from God and divine order due to the sin of disobedience, returns to the path of salvation through human authority".[20]

According to Jerotić, there are two cornerstones that make up the building of "theodulism" among Serbs: "two thousand years of the Christian vertical 'God – tsar or king - patriarch, father of family' and almost unparalleled in the history of other nations, the suffering of Serbs, from the Battle of Kosovo to present day".[21] The Serbian theodulism, i.e. insisting on specificities as a sublimate of patriarchy and suffering, together with the ethnophyletic[22] potential that the Eastern Christianity churches have always had, were narratives that opened the door to the specificities of the Serbian Orthodoxy, which would gain a sublimating context between Serbs as people and Orthodoxy as their religion.

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[17] More in: Miodrag M. Petrović, "O zakonopravilu ili Nomokanonu Svetoga Save", KIZ Kultura, Beograd, 1989, pp. 73-98.

[18] Until its end, in 1453, Byzantium considered itself the Roman Empire, and called its state the Imperium Romanum. The Byzantines called themselves Romans, and only later national categories (Greeks, Armenians, Serbs and others) were differentiated. Even today, in parts of Greece, there is the term *romaioi*, which means a local man, countryman. According to: Fjodor Uspenski, *Istorija Vizantijskog carstva od 11. do 15. veka*, Zepter Book, Beograd, 2000.

[19] Theodulia (according to the Greek word *Theodoulos*–servant of God) is a theological and political term that Nikolaj Velimirović used to describe the desired relationship between the church and state, following the example of Byzantium. He presented the doctrine of theodulia in his book "Serbian people as a theodoulos", proving that "the Serbian people are servants of God". He supported the establishment of a kind of Orthodox theocracy, which he calls "theodulia", as a way of organizing society, which means "the symphonia of the Church and State in the service to God". (According to: Krstan Malešević, *Ljudski trag*, Banja Luka, 2003) This concept of Velimirović unequivocally emphasizes the unity of the church and state. He believed that the separation of the church from the state is an accident and "a sick condition". "Wherever the church is separated from the state, there is a sick condition of either the church or the state or both." (According to: Saint Nikolaj Žički, *Srpski narod kao Teodul*, Podmaine Monastery, 2017) This is a kind of Orthodox theocracy in which "the harmony of the Church and State in the service to God" reigns. Mainly, the ruler's service to God, and then the service of people to such a ruler that they admire. He finds an example in the Serbian Middle Ages, which he idealizes by describing the Serbian medieval rulers as exemplary servants of God who the people admired. He explains the difference between this Byzantine and Western version of the medieval theocracy by saying that the Western version is about an "imposed master", and the Byzantine version is about "a voluntary servant".

[20] Borislav Grozdić, "Shvatanje o izvoru i poreklu državne vlasti - prilog izučavanju političke filosofije Nemanjića" *Srpska politička misao* 1/2016. (307-323), p. 319.

[21] Vladeta Jerotić, *Vera i nacija*, Ars Libri, Beograd, 2004, p. 242.

[22] Putting a national idea above the unity of religion is called *phyletism* (derived from the Greek word phyle - tribe). At the Local Council of Constantinople in 1872, this phenomenon was condemned as heresy.

Although the entire Middle Ages among Serbs were marked by the efforts of Saint Sava and their undoubted reflections, this term has not existed for a long time. Firstly, the complex adjective St. Sava's was created, and only ten years before the Second World War, the word Saint Sava's teaching was created, "which was built on the model of the noun Orthodoxy".[23] As an established concept that later became a spiritual orientation, Saint Sava's teaching originated in the interwar Kingdom, and was actualized by the Serbian theological and secular intelligentsia as a convenient "alternative to modern materialist civilization, and also to all other pre-Christian and post-Christian atheistic orientations".[24] According to Veljković, "Saint Sava's teaching is primarily appropriate festive rhetoric, which most often aims to call for the undefined Serbian national and religious unity, while dealing with an imaginary image of centuries old historical existence within which the Serbian church kept and preserved the Serbian people".[25]

Among prominent names during the establishment of Saint Sava's teaching, as the special spiritual vertical among Orthodox Serbs, the following are mentioned: Irinej Đorđević, PhD, Dimitrije Najdanović, PhD, Đoko Slijepčević, PhD, Milutin Devrnja, PhD and Bishop Nikolaj (Velimirović). Archimandrite Justin Popović, PhD, was the first to explicitly mention Saint Sava's teaching in his book „Svetosavlje kao filozofija života", written after the Second World War. The basis of this book is the lectures that Justin delivered to the Serbian youth, high school graduates and students during the German occupation, where he marked Saint Sava's teaching as the supreme and life-giving principle of the Serbian people and its history. Saint Sava's teaching, as Justin Popović said, „is not a new religion, but a philosophy of spiritual life in the Serbian conditions: historical, psychological, cultural… where these features are not erased, but being reborn and designed, are preserved as a sign of recognition and identity…".[26]

What the founders and protagonists of Saint Sava's teaching often point out is that "between the Serbian Orthodoxy and Orthodoxy as a whole, there are no dogmatic or ritual differences because both dogmatic teaching and the old Orthodox church tradition are the same with all Orthodox nations".[27] What is "a feature of the Serbian Orthodoxy that inextricably links it with ethnicity is the fact that it is based on the national experience of Orthodoxy and the synthesis between the national spirit and the church teaching."[28] This ethnophyletic potential of the Serbian Orthodoxy is also the weapons used by those who have established supremacy over the nation, as the supreme relic of the "upper" community of modern times, when they criticize

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[23] *Enciklopedija pravoslavlja - knjiga 3*, Savremena administracija, Beograd, p. 1712.

[24] Jelena Grbić, "Svetosavlje – omen za numen pravoslavlja", *Sabornost*, 7/2013, (145-158), p. 147.

[25] Vladimir Veljković, "Vek svetosavlja", *Peščanik*, October 9, 2019.

[26] *Enciklopedija pravoslavlja - knjiga 3*, Savremena administracija, Beograd, p. 1712.

[27] Milovan Subotić, "Između srpstva i pravoslavlja: Odnos nacije i konfesije nakon 800 godina od priznanja autokefalnosti SPC", Kultura polisa, posebno izdanje br. 2, Novi Sad, 2019, p. 86.

[28] Ibid.

such a non-secular union that they consider inappropriate for the 21st century Europe. Moreover, the critics of the ultimate embrace of the national with the religious are often joined by those fighters for more monolithic Orthodoxy, similar to the one that the Vatican has inviolable jurisdiction. In general, "the political ideo-logisation of Saint Sava's teaching is the most common type of its destructive mythologizing".[29] Its supporters point out that the primary goal of Saint Sava was much more of an "earthly" character, and that it was reflected in the effort to make the Serbian people nationally aware and politically independent. Therefore, "they consider his theology as an effort to cover up earthly goals with the assistance of high-profile church rhetoric".[30]

Does identity primacy belong to Serbianness or Orthodoxy?

In the part related to the Orthodox identity of Serbs and Saint Sava's teaching (presented as a kind of feature of the inseparable connection of the "earthly and heavenly"), a lot has already been said. The question that arises further is the following: is there the Serb identity without Orthodoxy, or, more precisely: is Orthodoxy the only (or superimposing) identity among Serbs? And, indeed, this is one of the essential issues that have always intrigued the Serbian intellectuals, clergy, and even persistent analysts from the region and the world, who have emphasized that Serbs are a category older than the religion they have accepted, and that there are other identities that define them.

Among the Serbian intellectuals of the 19th century there was a thesis, whose loudest advocate was Vuk Stefanović Karadžić, that *the essence of the Serbian national identity was the Serbian language.*[31] Starting from language as the primordial definition of a nation[32] and following that primordial one, "he considered

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[29] Ibid.

[30] Jelena Grbić, "Svetosavlje – omen za numen pravoslavlja", *Sabornost*, 7/2013, p. 152.

[31] This thesis has continued to this day and has a great number of supporters.

[32] Language, as the most important identity definition of nations, also appears in the modern milieu as one of the most significant. A recent study by the US Pew Research Center, on the topic "What it takes to be truly 'one of us'", presents interesting views on this issue in different countries. Four criteria have been taken into account - language, customs and tradition, religion and the country of origin. The results of the research show that in Europe (with the exception of Greeks and Hungarians), the United States, Canada, Australia and Japan, language is more important for defining national identity than place of birth, customs or religion. Analysing this research, and having tried to project the results of a similar issue on the example of Serbia, sociologist Jovo Bakić points out that "Serbs in a similar study would be closer to Greeks because religion would play a greater role than with other European nations, which is a product of historical and political circumstances in which identity was formed in relation to conquerors (Ottomans, Austro-Hungarians…)". The search for identity in religion is particularly problematic for this sociologist because it would mean giving up the cultural contribution of the Serbian Catholics, such as Ruđer Bošković or Matija Ban. According to: Ana Otašević, "Identitet na trapezu jezika, nacije i kulture", *Politika*, July 13, 2017.

language to be an older and more important factor of identity than religion/denomination, just as he refused the Church Slavonic and Slavo-Serbian to enter the Serbian linguistic norm for the sake of pure vernacular".[33] Guided by this identity orientation, he claimed that "true Croats are only Chakavian and Kajkavian, while Stokavian are in fact Serbs".[34] Karadžić notes that only those of the "Greek law" (Orthodox) call themselves Serbs, and that "others of this name will not accept that". He says that Muslims consider themselves real Turks, "although not one in a hundred knows Turkish".[35] Elaborating on this thesis, Vuk Karadžić points out for Catholics that they "call themselves after the places where they live": Slavonians, Bosnians (or Bosniaks), Dalmatians and Dubrovnik citizens, and that writers call them Illyrians. He adds that the Orthodox also call them: Bunjevci (in Bačka), Šokci (in Srem, Slavonia and Croatia), and Latins (around Dubrovnik and along the Bay of Kotor), and "in a friendly conversation" Christians, as well.[36]

Vuk's position on the existence of "Srba sva tri zakona" provoked conflicting comments, both in that era and today. In *Istorija srpskog naroda* by Ivić and Kašić, it is emphasized that Vuk's view was based primarily on the romantic understanding of language as an important basis of the nation, as well as on his refusal to reconcile from the position of an educated European and anti-clergyman with what they emphasize as "the crucial role of religion in national commitment".[37] These authors point out that Karadžić, who knows the Western culture well, rightly noticed that religious classification did not prevent the education of German, Dutch, Hungarian, Slovak and other nations, but that "historical conditions in the territory of the Serbo-Croatian language were different".[38]

The thesis that religion is the key identity watershed of the people in this area has been and is advocated by many historians. In his book "Srbi među evropskim narodima" Sima Ćirković emphasizes that "on the Balkan soil, among Serbs and their South Slavic neighbours, on the basis of a language, a dialectal continuum, it has been shown how several ethnic communities can grow, as well as classification according to other criteria (religious, political) can influence differentiation between languages".[39] Thus, Ćirković unequivocally gives the supremacy to the importance of

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[33] According to: D. Ivanić (ed.), "Vuk o srpskom jeziku i književnosti ili Srbi svi i svuda", in: Vuk Stefanović Karadžić, Srbi svi i svuda: o književnosti i jeziku (predgovori, kritike, polemike, članci, pisma), Andrićgrad, pp. 11–45.

[34] The study was written in 1836, and published in the book "Kovčežić za istoriju, jezik i običaje Srba sva tri zakona" in 1849. More in: Vuk Stefanović Karadžić, *Srbi svi i svuda*, available at http://ivoandric.no/biblioteka/Istorija/Vuk%20Stefanovic%20Karadzic%20-%20Srbi,%20svi%20i%20svuda.pdf 21/06/2019 .

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Pavle Ilić, Jovan Kašić, *Istorija srpskog naroda V-2: Kulturna istorija Srba u XX veku*, Srpska književna zadruga, Beograd, 1983.

[38] Ibid, p. 28.

[39] Sima Ćirković, *Srbi među evropskim narodima*, gen. quote, p. 81.

the religious border that separated Catholic Croats from Orthodox Serbs and both Christian groups from their Islamized compatriots, who have long been considered Turks, and points out that "religious border is imposed not so much by difference in dogmas as by cultural features, which crystallize over time around one religion".[40]

Milorad Ekmečić emphasizes the supremacy of the religious to an even more significant extent in the range of other identity features of the Balkan nations. Thus, in his book "Dugo kretanje između klanja i oranja", he notes that all "Balkan nations, except the Albanian one, are bounded by the borders of the same religion and its church organization".[41] Ekmečić returns to this topic by talking about the Herzegovina uprising (1875-1876), and on that occasion he points out that "what is generally acceptable for the whole science is the truth that behind all these processes of building national consciousness stands religion as a watershed of nations", and adds that "after the Berlin Congress religion as a watershed of nations in the South Slavic area flourishes into great political ideologies".[42]

Darko Tanasković also supports the thesis about religion as an important determinant in the profiling of nations in our country, saying that "in the period of the establishment of modern nations, religious affiliation became the key criterion for national classification of ethnically and linguistically close ethnic groups".[43] He also talks about the limiting range of Serbs as a nation due to the restriction to only one religion/denomination and points out that "the possibility of Serbs to be, as Vuk Karadžić said, "all three laws" was almost completely abolished, which greatly narrowed the scope of the Serbian national (self) determination".[44]

Sociological circles have also dealt with the importance of religion in the context of the establishment and survival of national identity. Koković and Žolt point out that "for a long time, religious identity was either a key element in defining ethnic identity, or it grew into a primary identity, pushing other elements of ethnicity into the background".[45] Sociologist Zorica Kuburović presents similar view in her book "Verske zajednice u Srbiji i verska distanca", where she recognizes religion as "a significant factor in the ethnic identity of Catholic Croats, Orthodox Serbs and Muslim Bosniaks, who are all South Slavs and all of them speak almost the same language".[46] The books of contemporary literature also deal with this phenomenon. One of the most important Serbian writers, Dobrica Ćosić, who was certainly not

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[40] Ibid, p. 82.

[41] Milorad Ekmečić, *Dugo kretanje između klanja i oranja – Istorija Srba u Novom veku (1482-1992)*, drugo, dopunjeno izdanje, Zavod za udžbenike, Beograd, 2008, p. 69.

[42] Ibid, p. 71.

[43] Jelena Čalija, "Nije baš svaki Srbin pravoslavne vere", Intervju sa prof. dr Darkom Tanaskovićem, Dnevni list *Politika*, Beograd, September 26, 2010, p. 8.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Lazar Žolt, Dragan Koković, „Etnička distanca u Vojvodini", *Sociološki pregled*, br. 3. 2005, p. 77.

[46] Zorica Kuburović, *Verske zajednice u Srbiji i verska distanca*, CEIR Novi Sad, 2010, p. 111.

known as a religious man, clearly emphasized religion as a key factor in the Serbian self-identification. Thus, in his latest book, Ćosić says: "about the survival of the Serbian ethnos in the coming centuries, from the Orthodox religion – I do not see a stronger immanent factor".[47]

It is obvious that two leading concepts of national identity have been crystallized on the example of the identity frictions among Serbs. According to the one, which is particularly represented by writers and philologists, *the basis of Serbianness is the Serbian lan*guage, and this concept sees Orthodoxy only as a subset of something much greater – the Serbian nation. This thesis is supported by the fact that "some non-Orthodox people declared themselves as Serbian writers; among them were Catholics (Matija Ban, Medo Pucić, Ivo Stojanović, Valtazar Bogišić, Petar Budmani, Marko Car, Milan Rešetar, Antun Fabris, Lujo Vojnović, Lujo Bakotić, Ivo Ćipiko, Đuro Vilović, Niko Bartulović, Ivo Andrić, Sibe Miličić), Muslims (Osman Đikić, Hamza Humo, Meša Selimović), of the Moses religion or at least of Jewish origin (Alfred Rosenzweig – Nenad Mitrov, Pavle Bihalji, Isak Samokovlija, Otto Bihalji-Merin, Moni de Buli, Oskar Davičo, Eli Finci, Erich Koš, Danilo Kiš, David Albahari) and Protestants (Ljudevit Vuličević)".[48]

According to the second concept, which is most often supported by priests and historians, *the basis of Serbianness is Orthodoxy*. As Đorđević points out, this thesis is more plausible because "throughout history, Orthodoxy has been the backbone of the Serbian national identity".[49] The literary language of Serbs and Croats today is (almost) the same, but what divides them is the confession: Serbs are Orthodox, and Croats are Roman Catholics.

In the end, it could be concluded that the Serbian national identity[50] is composed of many factors, but the most important ones are: language, alphabet, state-legal tradition and religion. Among all these factors, at least if we talk about something that has withstood the test of time, the most frequent one refers to religion/confession because according to such a factor, Serbs obviously belong to the Eastern Christian (Orthodox) civilization.

The relationship between the religious and the ethnic on the example of the 1990s wars

In the broader understanding of the Balkan conflicts in the 1990s, there are narratives according to which these conflicts are viewed as religious wars of a complicated character and changing correlation between the two denominations of

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[47] Dobrica Ćosić, *U tuđem veku*, Službeni glasnik, četvrto izdanje, Beograd 2012, p. 62.

[48] Vladislav Đorđević, „Svetosavlje – entelehija srpstva", *Ljudi govore*, Časopis za književnost i kulturu, 2012, p. 3.

[49] Ibid.

[50] According to the simplified, but essentially accurate view of Ana Trbovich, "three elements, together with the legacy of the Nemanjić dynasty, were crucial in creating identity and preserving it during foreign domination: the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Kosovo myth and the Serbian language." (Ana Trbovich, *A Legal Geography of Yugoslavia's Disintegration*, Oxford University Press, USA. 2008, p. 69.)

Christianity and the Sunni branch of the Hanafi madhhab[51] of the youngest monotheism. However, if we are guided by the unequivocal premise according to which religious wars are exclusively those that are fought over religious disputes and issues, then we can rightly conclude that the mentioned conflicts were not religious (or at least not in a narrow, primary sense) because they were not fought over irreconcilable religious differences and the problems generated in such a way. This is how they, of course, differ from some religious wars in the past. For example, religious wars in the 17th-century Europe would not have been possible without the Protestant Reformation, which was *de facto* an act of religious reform and transformation. Moreover, if we accept that "the importance of the religious dimension of a conflict increases in proportion to the extent to which religious structures coincide with power structures in a state",[52] then it is clear that the antagonisms in which the former SFRY disappeared are not a supporting example.

Namely, until the end of the 1980s, there was the pronounced secularization of the communist type, and the increase in religiosity at the end of those years mostly coincides with the transition from a quasi-religious system, such as the ideology of communism, to another system – nationalist ideology. Therefore, the perception that "communism and nationalism, as well as religion, represent certain symbolic systems, to which any broader, functional or symbolic definition of religion could be used" is important.[53] It seems that when defining the level of religious participation in recent conflicts, the main dilemma is the question – how we view modern religion, and whether we can separate the faithful and the religious, thus more clearly defining this presence, or how to distinguish the religious from other forms of belief because faith by its character can be religious, but also non-religious. If beliefs, rites and rituals are the main elements of every religion, then it could rightly be argued that quasi-religious systems such as communism and nationalism contain these elements[54] as important, often central, parts of their ideologies. At the level of belief (dogma) also rests the utopian-eschatological pattern contained in nationalist ideology, which relies on religious heritage, especially the one which comes from "the Abrahamic tradition"[55] of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

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[51] The Hanafi school is the oldest one out of the four Sunni schools of Islamic jurisprudence. It is most often interpreted that it gives supremacy to the role of reason, and that it is more liberal than the other three schools (Maliki, Shafi'i, Hanbali) and has the most followers. The greatest concentration of followers of this direction is among Sunnis in Central Asia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, China, as well as in Iraq, Mauritania, Turkey, Albania, Bosnia, Kosmet, Macedonia, and in the Balkans and the Caucasus in general. According to: John L. Esposito, ed. *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

[52] According to the thesis of the German Catholic theologian Heintz-Günther Stobbe, Hajnc Ginter Štobe, "Religijske implikacije sukoba u Centralnoj i Istočnoj Evropi", u: *Hrišćanstvo, društvo, politika*, JUNIR godišnjak VI, Niš, 1999, p. 36.

[53] Milan Vukomanović, "Uloga religije u jugoslovenskim sukobima" u: *Nasilno rasturanje Jugoslavije – uzroci, dinamika*, posledice, Centar za civilno-vojne odnose, Beograd 2004, p. 129.

[54] This is primarily related to faith and rites.

[55] The Abrahamic religions is a term used in the study of comparative religion to describe those religions that trace their origins from the common, ancient Semitic tradition.

As far as rites are concerned, we can already see the parallelism between religious and political rituals at the level of semantics, that is, recognizable ritual patterns: "the rites of passage or glorification of a religious, i.e. military and political leader in his earthly, and also posthumous existence".[56] This is, of course, one of the answers to the question of how the military top brass of the former SFRY "was converted from a communist to a nationalist quasi-religious matrix in such a simple way".

However, despite the mentioned similarities between religious and quasi-religious systems, the conflicts in the SFRY could not be unreservedly characterized as quasi-religious or interreligious. Resolving this dilemma leads to modern conflicts that have taken and take place around the world and the fact that most conflicts in the world, in which religion is a factor, are not about religious issues, but primarily about the so-called "identity conflicts", in which religion can indeed serve as a suitable *differentia specifica*, which sometimes makes it easier to articulate much more complex reasons for conflict, even an armed conflict. Enzo Pace also says that "in the lap of all great world religions, individuals and movements are being created that use "a religious compass" in drawing cognitive maps to move "the mental mechanism of war", the war that creates the Enemy that has to be fought and who, let's not be naive, 'should be destroyed'."[57] Thus, Pace continues, "political leaders, and history tells us a lot about that, and our recent one, whenever they lack convincing motives for waging war, reach for the sacred values cherished by all members of a certain nation."[58] In such an environment of religion, using their apparatus of rituals and symbols, they stage space, a kind of theatre performance, in which, as Pace goes on to say, "the drama of identity is presented, the drama of endangering one's being from the Enemy".[59]

In this way, religions engage in war as an effective social means of communication which, in the depths of human feelings, convincingly claims that resorting to violence is good, sometimes fateful, inevitable. In such efforts to defend the endangered identity, conflicts with enemy represent "the breath of life that feeds the brain of society with the oxygen of collective movements" and groups with a religious basis, which gives war eschatological features: it is the struggle of Good against (united) forces of Evil. Thus, religions, no matter how much they would like to be universal, become ethnic, and that means partial, forgetting, as in the case of mutual conflicts between Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants, Muslims and Judaists, that they all come from the same Abraham's wing.

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[56] Milan Vukomanović, "Uloga religije u jugoslovenskim sukobima" u: *Nasilno rasturanje Jugoslavije – uzroci, dinamika, posledice*, Centar za civilno-vojne odnose, Beograd 2004, p. 130.

[57] Enzo Pace*, Zašto religije ulaze u rat?* Golden marketing – Tehnička knjiga, Zagreb 2009. p. 56.

[58] Ibid, p. 57.

[59] Ibid.

It seems that was exactly the case with the Balkan wars. The secularized society, in a special way from the 1960s and 1970s, in which the atheist ideology of the communist type left its recognizable trace, both politically and nationally, culturally and religiously, had to face abruptly in the late 1980s and early 1990s with mass ethno mobilization in the form of forced identification of both religious and national.

It was also the confrontation with one's religious semi-literacy in almost all religions and denominations in this area, in which the inclination for religious phyletism[60] and populism found its safe haven. Due to these intricate ties, further complicated during the 1990s wars, after a long period of politicization of the religious (first in the communist, and then in the nationalist consideration), there was subsequent, secondary religiousizing of conflicts. This, of course, has found its expression in some theories about the religious roots of the conflicts in the SFRY. The 1991–1995 war in the former Yugoslavia, however, was more the result of political and interethnic conflict. Religion appears in it as an important element of ethnicity, so, both because of oversight and ignorance, it was perceived in such a context as an interreligious conflict.

That religious element, although present in all the 1990s conflicts, was not so important (especially not crucial) is proved by the fact that it was not emphasized either in the Dayton Accords or the Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe. As Vukomanović notes, "in the Dayton Accords, religion is mentioned (in a very general sense) only in the Constitution and the Annex on Human Rights, while in the Stability Pact, religion and churches are not mentioned at all".[61]

The phyletistic potential of religion in the Balkans with the emphasis on the supremacy of the ethnic and territorial in relation to the spiritual can be seen from the attitude of religious communities towards the war understood as a territorial issue. This was particularly expressed in those cases where territorial organization is inherent in church organization, as is the case with the Serbian Orthodox Church. Namely, in warring conditions, holiness has become more and more connected to territory, and much less, in the spirit of Christ' message, to relations between people, even of the same ethnicity, who inhabited that area.

The politicization of religion has obviously contributed to religious factor being present in many conflicts in the Balkans at the end of the previous and the beginning of the 21st century. Although often mentioned as the main reason, religious conflicts

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[60] Throughout history, religious phyletism has manifested itself in a number of conflict situations in which there has been the confrontation between general religious principles and special national interests. This phenomenon came to the fore during the rise of national movements, during the 19th and 20th century. For more on the topic of ethnophyletism and its significance in the study of the complicated relationship between the nation and the church, see: Saša Marković "Istorija religije, između etnofiletizma i obrazovnog predmeta". *Srpski jezik, književnost, umetnost*: Zbornik radova, Kragujevac: Filološko-umetnički fakultet, 2012. pp. 375–387.

[61] Milan Vukomanović, "Uloga religije u jugoslovenskim sukobima" u: *Nasilno rasturanje Jugoslavije – uzroci, dinamika, posledice*, Centar za civilno-vojne odnose, Beograd 2004, p. 132.

were most often a combination of complex and covert interests of religious organizations abused by major geopolitical factors and instrumentalized by ambitious local political leaders. Therefore, in this context, we can talk about the Balkan form of the privatization of religion, which resulted from its politicization.

Of course, it is difficult to draw a clear line between these two modern, and often deliberately mixed phenomena – the abuse and use of religion for purposes that are far beyond it. However, given its already known and emphasized *conflict potential*, it is not difficult to push it into this dishonourable and violent context of interest conflicts. Religious organizations, united with local levels of government, have often received, as Despotović notes well, two forms of expressing conflict potential. "One is the more obvious one - *the manifest form* and the other less visible *latent* form. The first is reflected primarily in the visible connection of religiosity itself as a manifestation of the connection between the cognitive and emotional relationship to the supreme being – God, while the other one was expressed as a less visible connection that provides a kind of exclusive guarantee for defending national and cultural identity".[62] The modern history of the conflicts in the Balkans shows that "the most dominant was the protective and integrative function of religion as a homogeneous factor of synthetic nations, which resulted from such a connection, which was a particularly significant feature of synthetic nations created in the context of planned processes of identity geopolitics".[63]

Instead of conclusion

Religious/confessional identity is, in addition to linguistic, the most important segment and indicator of ethnic/national identity. It is theoretically possible for this identity to be independent and not directly related to ethnic or national affiliation. In practice, however, this independence is much more complex and multimeaning. Bearing in mind that religious classification strongly corresponds to ethnic/national classification, it is difficult to avoid a situation in which the religiosity of an individual inevitably has some meaning in ethnic and national discourse. Therefore, the problem of religious (consequently confessional) identity of a member of a nation or ethnic group cannot be understood if it is viewed separately, i.e. only as a problem of religiosity. Both religion and nation offer collective identity, and at the same time provide an answer to the eternal questions of an individual, such as: *who am I and where is my place in the community?*

In a kind of global competition between the primacy of religion and nation in the world of key collective identities today and the circumstances in which religion seems to be losing its primacy, it still manages to survive largely due to its supranational character. What is specific about the Eastern Christianity is that the

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[62] Ljubiša Despotović, "Verski identiteti na Balkanu", Kulturni centar Novog Sada, April 4, 2019.
[63] Ljubiša Despotović, *Globalizacija i geopolitika identiteta*, Kairos, Sremski Karlovci, 2017. p. 124.

Orthodox Church emphasizes its autocephaly, which automatically implies its national symbol. Emphasizing the unbreakable connection of Orthodoxy with the Serbian national identity, which particularly marked the period between the two world wars, is often interpreted as a kind of church nationalism. The name "Serbian Orthodox Church" is often interpreted by the order of words in which it is first Serbian, then Orthodox, and only then Christian. Vladeta Jerotić pointed out that until the beginning of the 20th century, the Serbian Orthodox Church was more often called the "Orthodox Serbian Church" and emphasized the need that it may and should "find its place, not only in the future harmonious community of all Orthodox churches, but also in its, by the spiritually enlightened minds of Serbia, the superior mission of 'the golden bridge' between the East and the West".[64] Radovan Bigović also spoke about the fact that nationalism is contrary to the Gospel, emphasizing: "Ethnophyletism and ethnocentrism are heresies of our time and they shake our church, as well". In this way, "the complex of superiority and misconceptions about 'the innocent East' and 'the rotten West' is spreading, as if it is overlooked that the East is now in the West, and the West in the East".[65]

Therefore, it is particularly important to return to religiosity in the way of its foundations, love, spiritual community and forgiveness. Otherwise, we will continue to talk about the seemingly absurd situation in which our people are "insufficiently ecclesiastical" at the time of mass return to religion and church, at the time of general retraditionalization and desecularization of society, especially in the light of the fact that the Serbian Orthodox Church is, according to all available research, the institution which, besides the Armed Forces, enjoys the greatest trust in the Serbian public. This should be particularly kept in mind during the great jubilee – 800 years since the proclamation of the autocephaly of the Serbian Orthodox Church because it is an opportunity to think about the importance of more clearly defined jurisdictions of the sacred and profane in the Serbian society, burdened with various antagonisms.

Along with more clearly defined identity features and the scope of their exposure to Serbs, communication with members of other nations and denominations is very important, both in Serbia and in the region. Recognizing the complex character of different cultural factors, customs, dispersive cultural patterns and religious confessions in different ethnic and religious communities, Serbia should address this sensitive issue in a balanced way and "treat its contemporary identity as a cohesive and inclusive factor of society",[66] which would be reflected in the "common heritage of all citizens of Serbia and intercultural dialogue at all levels".[67] Therefore, it is important that "contemporary strategic culture of the Republic of Serbia, especially in

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[64] Vladeta Jerotić, *Vera i nacija*, Ars Libri, Beograd, 2004, p. 18.
[65] Radovan Bigović, "Pravoslavlje i verska tolerancija", *Kultura*, Beograd, 1993.
[66] "Strategija razvoja kulture Republike Srbije od 2017. do 2027.", p. 2.
[67] Ibid.

the context of these easily antagonizing factors, such as different ethnic and religious identities, is based on the culture of remembrance and understanding, active contribution to regional and European cultural space, all in the mission of general development, positioning and improving reputation in international context".

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Религијски и етнички контекст
стратешке културе Србије

У раду под називом „Религија као фактор стратешке културе на примерима хришћанства и ислама" анализиране су идеје и вредности које разликују шта је „дозвољено" а шта није, пре свега у употреби силе. Овај рад има глобални карактер, па се указала потреба да се настави истраживање о томе како религија учествује у стратешкој оријентацији појединих земаља. Како се Србија односи према овом фактору стратешке културе? У којој мери учествује у актуелној политичкој стварности? Како овај фактор комуницира са еквивалентним наративима у земљама у окружењу, посебно у светлу сукоба током деведесетих? Где је разлика између етничког и верског контекста идентитета? У којој мери се ова два контекста подржавају, а у којој мери представљају препреку идентитетској профилизацији нашег друштва? Ово су нека од истраживачких питања овог рада. Мултидисциплинарни приступ и референтна литература представљају валидан оквир за тачне и објективне одговоре на наведена питања.

Кључне речи: *стратешка култура, религија, православље, етнос, народ, нација, безбедност, рат*